



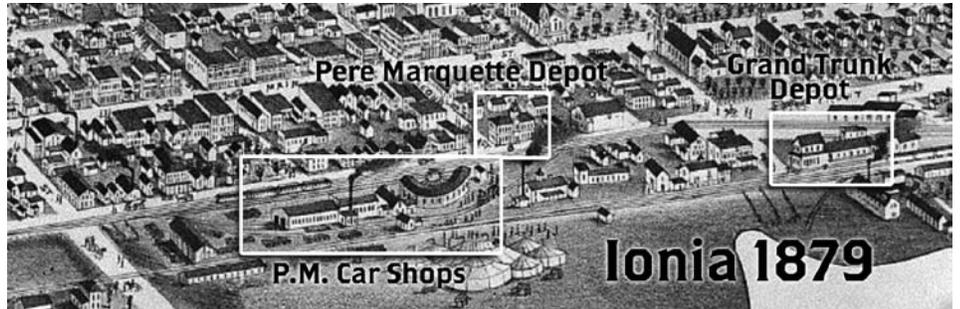
The Almost Monthly Publication of
the Ionia County Historical Society

the CHRONICLE



Ionia's Grand Trunk Depot Celebrates 100 Years

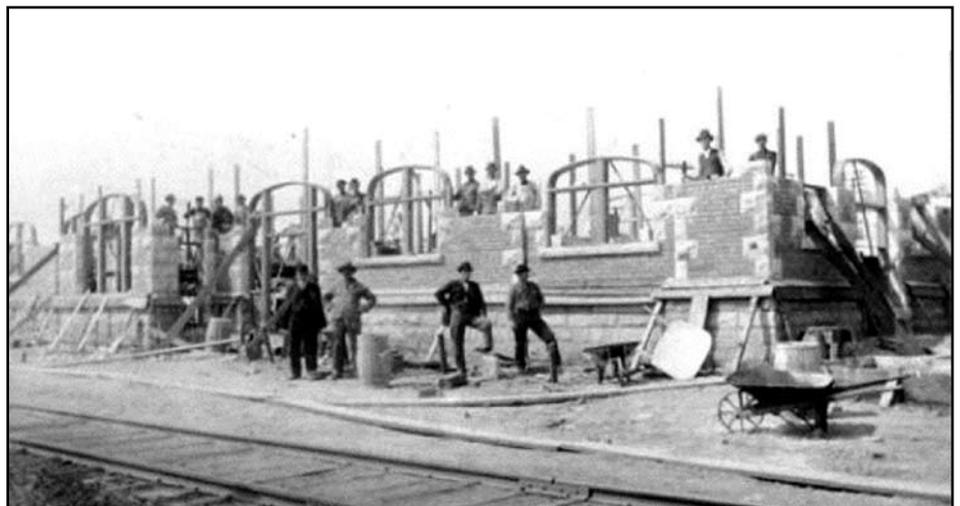
In 1868, the Detroit & Milwaukee Railroad built a depot in Ionia which replaced an older 1860 depot. This depot (along with the D&M) became the property of the Detroit, Grand Haven and Milwaukee in 1878, and later that same year came under the control of the Grand Trunk Western Railway Corporation. (This location is shown in the panoramic view at right.)



A new depot had been proposed around 1907, but before this project could be started, there came "The Great Depot Fire." It was July of 1908 when a fire was discovered beneath the floor of the depot. It swiftly grew out of control and spread to railroad cars in the yard, and the winds carried the embers northeast into the residential section of Ionia. Many houses caught fire, but most were extinguished before burning entirely. However, the Presbyterian Church was not so lucky, and was completely destroyed. Several rail cars were destroyed, as well as a large quantity of freight, and literally all the records in the Grand Trunk office. Several manufacturers' warehouses were burned as well with their stock.

Surprisingly, the Grand Trunk company did not rebuild right away. After several delays (some political and some financial), the construction finally got under way in August of 1909. The construction company had built many depots in the midwest, under contract to Grand Trunk for many years. They brought in Bedford Stone from Indiana, and combined that with local sandstone

Continues on page 2



NEXT MONTH: Ionia's First Methodist Church, Main St. (We meet there instead of the Blanchard House, February 4th)

and brick to complete the task. Over the next year, construction was carried on methodically by this tenured crew as the depot slowly took shape.

On Sunday evening, 19 August 1910, the new Grand Trunk Depot was opened to the public. Train No. 14 from Grand Rapids was the first to stop and unload and take on passengers.

Ionia's depot served the community well over the next 60 years. Passenger service lasted until 1959 and was regularly hauled by steam engines until December 1958. In 1987 Grand Trunk sold the line to the Central Michigan Railroad and the company sold off all the old depots along the line.

Ionia's Depot fell into

This photo clearly shows the Pere Marquette station in the background, north of the G.T. Depot. The deed to the property had to be negotiated with the P.M.R.R. which was just one of the delays in the construction of Ionia's Grand Trunk Depot.



disrepair for some years, with a couple of restoration attempts made in the 1990s until it was purchased by Hoppoughs in 1995.

The present owners, Tanda Kramer (our hostess for the evening) and Bobbie Wachowski purchased the building in 2002 and established the Signature

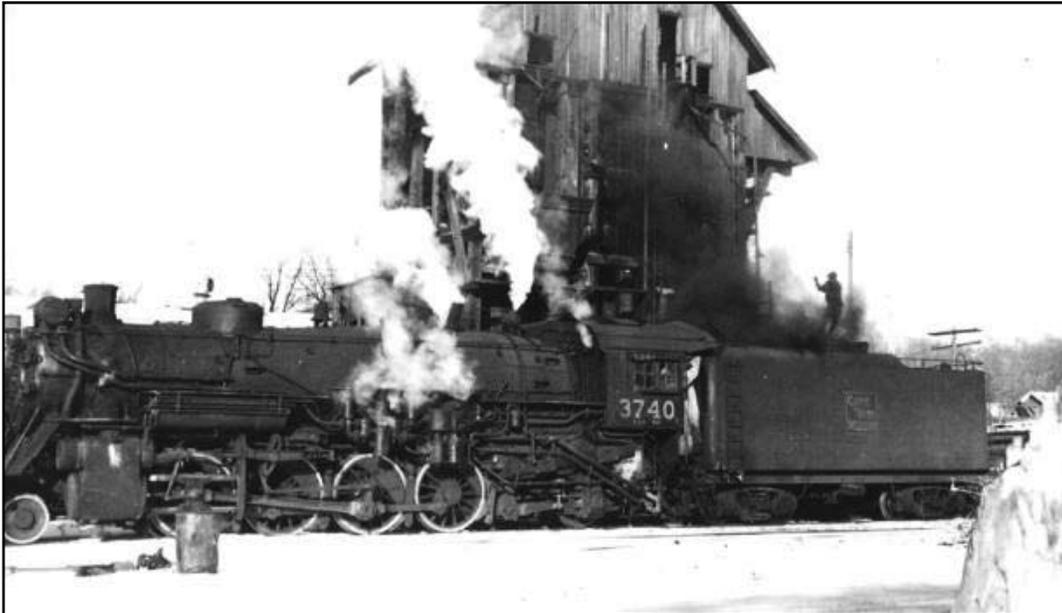
Salon. They did extensive restoration to the building, but had to make some compromises for practical reasons.

The original tile floors and most of the woodwork are still intact, and one can imagine the bustling crew and passengers in the depot in bygone years. Historic

photos adorn the walls, and the arrangement of rooms is still as it was when the depot was built.

According to Tanda, the depot is a popular tourist attraction and photo spot. Railroad buffs come to see the depot and study the details of the building, and antique postcards of the place continue to be popular with collectors. She noted that the beams of the original ceiling (a few feet above the present one) have the construction workers' names carved into them.

ICHS members swapped stories about the Depot, remembering its important role in the community for so many years. Many thanks to our hosts for allowing us to meet in this historic place!



Grand Trunk Western 3740 at the Ionia coal dock. Date unknown. 3740 was an S-3-b, 2-8-2 built by Alco in 1923. It was renumbered to 4076 in 1957-58. Scrapped in 1961.

The coaling tower stood east of the depot. Passenger trains in later years had larger tenders and did not have to take on coal at Ionia, freight trains with heavy tonnage did. Still in service during the summer of 1958, the Ionia coaling tower was out of service by early fall.

On Dec. 31, 1958 it was dropped to the ground with dynamite and dismantled.



Our own Gerard Perry, pictured here as Chief Sqwatoo (from his recent Christmas Card!).

CONGRATULATIONS to Jerry on his recent award from Boy Scouts of America: "Veteran Scouter" for over 70 years of service to Scouting!

He received presentations from the Governor of Michigan, the G.R. Ford Council and Five Rivers District of the BSA, as well as heartfelt thanks from his fellow Scouters.

Thanks, Jerry!

Ionia's railroad heritage is fascinating indeed. Since the first locomotive chugged its way into Ionia in 1857, there have been tales of disastrous train wrecks, famous celebrity visitors, circuses and special attractions through the years. Our history is surely shaped in a very large part by our railroads. The tracks are gone now - but not forgotten!



Minutes from the January Meeting

Prior to the January meeting, some members of the ICHS met for dinner. By 7:30, the members made their way to the Signature Salon (the old Grand Trunk Depot), and the meeting was called to order by President Kris Haskins.

Kris reported that the diseased and dieing trees at the Blanchard House had now been felled and cleaned up, and the house is ready for the winter season. Christmas decorations have begun to come down as Thursday afternoon work sessions continue to make progress. The Accessions Committee met during the holidays to discuss some of their responsibilities and procedures, and Chairman David McCord reported that a helpful book on the "Registration of Collections for Small Museums" has been ordered. McCord also reported that he is putting together a budget for the committee to be brought to the Board at the February business meeting. Plans for grants will be discussed at the same meeting.

Doni Knoop reported that the Quilt Raffle is doing well, and is looking forward to the drawing at the April ICHS meeting. The Quilt will be on display at the March Community Expo, and members are encouraged to sell (and buy!) tickets for this beautiful item.

Looking forward to the 2012 calendar, Kris asked about dates for this year's more significant activities. A date must soon be set for the Upstairs/

Downtown Tours, which we are planning for the month of May. Another Cemetery Tour will be held on October 22 this year. Our schedule of monthly programs needs to be fleshed out as well, and Kris is asking the membership for suggestions.

The Board has approved the purchase of two new vacuum cleaners for the Blanchard House. As progress is made in sorting and cataloging the collections there, more items are being added to the "wish list" as well.

Kris requested that his email address be added to the "info@ionia-history.org" list, so he can be more aware of the communications in that medium. Responses to the emails that come in through the website are not very well organized, and perhaps a better plan can be put in place.

David McCord also mentioned that he and his wife, Annette, have begun to sort through the thousands of 35mm slides from the ICHS collection, donated by the MacPherson estate. Most of these are in "carousels" but we have no projector to handle these. Gerry Perry spoke up then, saying that he had two such projectors and would be happy to loan one for the purpose. There are also several dozen cassette tapes which we think are (among other things) Monroe MacPherson's narration for some of the slide presentations. Watch for more news on this in future Chronicles!

The next meeting will be held at the Ionia First Methodist Church on East Main, February 4th at 7:00 p.m.

Upcoming Programs and Events

Wednesday, February 4th, 7:00 p.m.

The meeting will be held at the First United Methodist Church on Main St.

Wednesday, February 19th, 7:00 p.m.

Board of Directors / Business Meeting at the Blanchard House - All members invited!

Wednesday, March 6th, 7:00 p.m.

Meeting will be held at the Blanchard House Program to be announced.

Wednesday, March 20th, 7:00 p.m.

Board of Directors / Business Meeting at the Blanchard House - All members invited!

Wednesday, April 2nd, 7:00 p.m.

Meeting at the Blanchard House includes Drawing for the Quilt Raffle!!!

For other upcoming events - visit the ICHS website at ioniahistory.org.



MEMORIES & MOMENTOS  **HERITAGE & HISTORY**

Just a few of the many things available at the Blanchard House / Ionia Museum Gift Shop.



The Journey of the Dexter Colony, 1833, by David & Annette McCord. A detailed history of the settling of Ionia.
\$12 each (\$15 with postage)



A History of Bertha Brock Park on its 80th "Birthday" by David McCord. \$6 each

ALSO AVAILABLE:

Reproductions of historic Ionia publications —

- 1887 "Headlight Flashes" Special Edition
- 1907 Ionia Souvenir Book
- 1973 Ionia City Centennial Program Book

PLUS reproduction and new POSTCARDS of Ionia's Landmarks and Architecture!

DVD VIDEO SOUVENIRS!

These movies have proven to be our most popular offerings to date, and recent discoveries have added several popular new titles to the list:

- **1939 "We're In The Movies"** This promotional film was produced by Ionia businesses and organizations to promote the town. The soundtrack has been lost, but the images present a wonderful look into our town over 70 years ago.
- **1950s Home Show and Free Fair Movies**
- **1976 - The U.S. Bicentennial in Ionia**
- **1937 Ionia Airport Inaugural plus Bertha Brock Park's 1940 "Winter Festival"**
- **1973 Ionia Centennial Documentary**
- **"Ionia's First 150 Years" and "Ionia - A Look Back"** - Documentaries by Monroe MacPherson

DVDs are available for \$10 each!

THANKS TO OUR BUSINESS BUDDIES!

These local businesses support the Ionia County Historical Society. Please support them in return!

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the www.ioniahistory.org **CHRONICLE**

The Chronicle is the official publication of the Ionia County Historical Society. It is written, edited, and published by David McCord, Secretary. Any comments, corrections (of course), or contributions should be directed to the editor c/o the ICHS at P.O. Box 176, Ionia, MI, 48846 or via www.ioniahistory.org.

Ionia County Historical Society
P.O. Box 176
Ionia, MI 48846



JOIN TODAY!

If you'd like to help us preserve the area's heritage, please fill in the form below and send it, with check or money order, to the ICHS Treasurer, care of Box 176, Ionia, MI 48846.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, St., Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please Check Your Membership Type:

- Regular = \$20
- Sustaining = \$35
- Business Buddy = \$40
- Corporate = \$250
- Life = \$1000
- Free to Students under 18
- Gift = \$ _____

Please Share a Little Information:

- Renewing Member
- New Member

If you're a new member, how did you hear about us?

Thanks!

Join Us at the Ionia Theatre at 9:30 a.m. every Thursday for **FREE ICHS Travelogues!**

- January 12 — Bakersfield to Mojave, CA
- January 19 — Scenery of the Atlantic Coast
- January 26 — Anchorage to Seward
- February 2 — The Appalachians
- February 9 — Somewhere in Time
- February 16 — Mount Vernon

SAVE THE DATE: JULY 14, 2012

Art in the Park at Bertha Brock Park, Ionia

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